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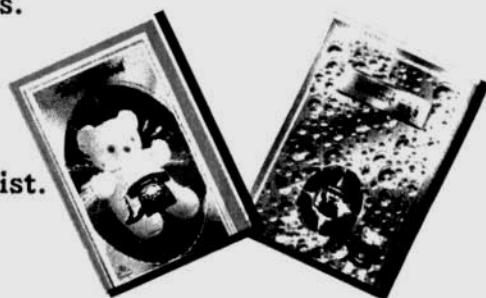


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Contents

Editorial	1
Be More Enterprising, Minister Tells Artists	2
City Vainika regales Maharashtra listeners	3
Manodharma : Soul of Indian Music	4
Impressive Dance Debut in Geneva	6
From Here and There	7
Mysore Musings	10
Tuneful Encounters-26	13
Hidden Talent Galore in SSS Annual	14
Senior critic feted	15
Another Music Sabha for Udupi	15
Pre-trinity composers' Day	16
PAC comes out with 2 more useful books	17
Delightful Baroque Music	19
In Lighter Vein	20

Artistes Show The Way

It is well over fifty years since our beloved country won its Independence. During these eventful years, it has seen a sea-change in more than one aspect of-life. To borrow a familiar Dickensian phrase, it has been the best of times and it has been the worst of times. While there has been a phenomenal progress in the fields of education, science and technology, this has only made the growing problem of unemployment more challenging. Likewise, the strides made in food production and health care can compare favourably with any affluent country. But the nagging problems of sickness and malnutrition persist as menacingly as ever. Literacy rate has never been as rosy as it is today. Yet more than half the population still remains deprived of elementary education. Bridging the gap between the rich and poor still remains an Utopian dream.

The situation is more dismal when it comes to the question of fostering national integration. Though the oft-repeated slogan "unity in diversity" sounds meaningful, it is the divisive forces like communalism, casteism and linguistic chauvinism that are seemingly more active than moves towards fostering unity. If at all the spirit of unity manifests itself it is only in times of a national crises like the intermittent wars with Pakistan that threatened our hard won freedom. The spontaneous way people all over the country and those settled abroad munificently responded to help the bereaved families of the martyred soldiers and those who suffered severe injuries speaks volumes for the patriotic zeal of our people. This euphoria, alas, is short-lived, paradoxically the very same people stooping to capitalise the situation for political purposes!

The artiste community, including painters, theatre personalities, dancers, musicians and cine artistes did not lag behind in rising to the occasion. The spontaneity in which they joined together to raise funds for the noble cause is eloquent testimony to their patriotic fervour and humane disposition. They got up shows in a variety of ways all over the country and collected sizeable amounts to meet the demands of the situation. That verily exemplified the popular slogan "unity in diversity", not witnessed ever before in such an emphatic manner. That also raised hopes that artistes can show the way for achieving the elusive national integration.

As encouraging was a function got up in the City recently by Nupura, the well-known school of Bharathanatyam. The occasion was to pay homage to E. Krishna Iyer, the savant of Chennai who had saved the dance form from extinction. The sponsor for the impressive function was the Delhi-based India International Rural Culture Centre, a unique coming together of three diverse interests. How wonderful if this spirit of dance could endure!

□ S.N. Chandrasekhar

Be More Enterprising, Minister Tells Artistes

Kusuma Rao

A dignified, pleasant function was jointly organised by The Bangalore Press and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to release the special issue of **PHOENIX (Music's Millennium)** in early August 1999. Veteran R.K. Srikantan released the number. Minister for Information and Publicity M.P. Prakash was the Chief Guest.

The speech by the Minister was relevant and spiced with good humour. He spoke of how our own artistes ought to wake up and get about, make themselves known and blaze a trail of name and fame. "We do not set a proper value on our own assets and are quite content to accept a tenth of the remuneration offered to North Indian artiste", he lamented.

The Minister praised the



Vidwan R.K. Srikantan releasing the Number

efforts of the **PHOENIX** folks and wished them good luck. Srikantan also complimented the Editorial Board for its dedicated work.

A vocal recital by M.S. Sheela, franked by Nalina Mohan on Violin and Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma on

Mrudangam formed part of a well attended function.

Sheela's music, as always, was worth waiting for. Opening with a rare Vinayaka kriti (Sinduramakriya) she regaled the listeners with familiar songs like Sogasuga (Sriranjani) and Sarasadalayanane (Saramathi). Mohana got a spacious airing, an enlivening Nannu Palimpa sparkling with an array of Niraval and Swara Prasthara in the charana.

The Thani avarthanam of Shivu was invigorating. Sheela concluded the compact concert with an inspiring Purandara-dasa Pada (Samanya Vallavee) in Charukeshi and a thillana in Paras.

Nalina Mohan ably supported Sheela's seasoned vocalism with her tuneful

(Continued to Page-3)



The Twain meets : R.K. Srikantan and Dr. M.R. Gautham

City Vainika regales Maharashtra listeners



City Vainika regates Maharashtra listeners

Two Veena recitals of Rukmini Krishnan of Bangalore—one at Pune and another at Mumbai attracted

usual attention. Rukmini has been performing for over five years both in India and abroad. Her concert at NCPA in June

last was her second at the same venue in one year, which speaks volumes about her popularity.

Mathe Malayadhwaja (well-known Kamas Daru) gave Rukmini a flaying start to her Bombay concert. A brisk ode in Naata to Vinayaka and melodious Bhajare Manasa (Bheempalas) came in for as systematic a treatment.

Panthuvarali received a more detailed airing, the kriti Apparama Bhakti invested with lively neraval. Kapi (Intasoukhya) was the main raga for the evening. While the alapana was trite, a neat round of tanam embellished the form. Ailting Sindhu-Bhairavi piece and a Thillana in Karnaranjini rounded off the enjoyable fare.

For the Poona Sangeetha Sabha the celebrated Bhairavi Varna enlivened the proceedings. After a crispe Banthureethi (Hamsanada), Madyamavathi traversed majestically to arrive at Palinchu in its haunting melodic grace.

Before the spacious Kalyani, invested with a racy Thanam and Pallavi in Khanda jati Triputa tala. Rukmini rendered Ramachandram (Vasanthha) with reposeful ease. Ragas like Kanada, Begada, Hamsanandi and Sindhubhairavi hightened the Swaraprastara in the Pallavi.

The Hameerkalyani Thillana gave a fitting finale to the concert in which Rukmini was accompanied by B.C. Manjunath on Mrudangam and S.N. Narayanamurthy on Ghatam both from Bangalore.

(Continued from Page-2)



Vidushi M.S. Sheela Hanked by Nalina Mohan on Violin and Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma on Mridanga in concert

interpretation. Sridhara Murthy did a fine job in introducing guests and artistes in chaste Kannada.

Manodharma: Soul of Indian Music

—Garland Rajagopalan

In the sweet sphere of Indian classical music, *manodharma* stands for inspired, spontaneous, extempore improvisation. It is the sheet anchor, *tour de force* of Indian music. It is an intellectual, individualistic adventure into what is actually unknown, unperceived and uncharted. It is entirely a creative endeavour, a technical melodic kite-flying which may pervade musician's delineation of *raaga* [*sancaara*] or *taana* and in the exposition of *kalpana swara* as well as solo [*tani aavartana*] percussion. The enormity of the scope of indenting on *manodharma* is indeed baffling depending on the cerebral and musical armoury of each artiste. It comes into play even while introducing variations called *sannagatis*. It has no fixity of shape, range, tempo, modulation, timbre, time-measure or any of the usual constraints. It is akin to the delightful flights of the celestial bird, Garuda high up the blue skies on a pleasant morn with all the beauteous variations it carries out or indulges in. In short, it is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient!

Manodharma is a capricious asset, which may sometimes desert even a maestro and the wizard. Thus one finds sometimes top musicians very stale and a

novice scaling heights with uninhibited ease, totally unnatural and unexpected of him. It may put to shame great expectations and cast pre-planned, pre-rehearsed *sancaaras*, *gamakas*, *brikas*, *jaarus*, embellishments and other ornamental presentation totally out of bounds not infrequently; but suddenly on other occasions, choose to catapult the musician to dizzy heights he himself had never visualized. The titan and wizard Maharajapuram Viswanatha Ayyar would not infrequently disappoint his fans since he was the most, ideal example of adroit musical versatility, grandeur and wayward ways. When *manodharma* chooses to stay away from an artiste, he is blissfully devoid of awareness of his conscious musical self, his mind stands divorced of all access to paths and links with improvisation and he finds himself fish out of water or like a storm-battered boat in oceanic wastes as is beautifully described by Tyagaraja in *Nauka Caritra*—*Allakallola maayanamma song in raaga. Sourastram*. [How cyclonic storms devastated Sourashtra coast just two years back is recent history.] The mind gets tense declining to rise and link up like a plane or automobile that has lost its control or a naughty, recalcitrant child and get into grips with evading *manodharmic* flights. The

latter may either elude to the dismay and disappointment of all or suddenly invest him with the spirit—a sort of passing estrangement and subsequent reconciliation as in the field of *sringara*. In this context, the relationship between the musician and *manodharma* is akin to a *virahotkanthita* [*the naayika* in the musician being nervously anxious on account of her lover not turning up as expected] or a *vipralabdha* [disappointed in not finding her lover at the appointed time or place]. The musician is virtually in the state of a *viyoga* [longing for the lover].

★ ★ ★

Every right to freedom is hedged in by mandatory directive principles. Even so, this *manodharma* too has to conform to certain fundamental stipulations such as—

Conforming to the *aarohana* and the *avarohana* of the *raaga* presently dealt with by the artiste;

Focussing on the *bhaava*, *chaaya* and other essential elements of the *raaga* fully; and presenting the *saahitya* [lyric] and *laya* in all their impressive and inherent grandeur in a spirit of camaraderie with it and not in isolation in which case it should fail to evoke appreciation from audience.

Manodharma underscores the grade and merit of the

musician and of the concert. *Sans manodharma*, there could be no classical music in India. It is the essential ingredient, the soul [*jiva*] of Indian music—Carnatic or Hindustani.

Manodharmic venture in *raaga* delineation, *taana* or *swara* exposition is colourfully compared to the flight of the sacred eagle with its majestic, casual, lazy, *couka kaala* floats on the high skies, its sudden sweeps, fickle twists, unexpected turns and swirls. The percussionist seeks to divine the next phase of the principal artiste to present his accompaniment in tune with it. Not infrequently he may fail and be disappointed in his anticipation by chance or by the wilful dunkirking resorted to by the main artiste. [This was much in evidence in earlier decades when accompanists were at the mercy of titans who dictated terms and not infrequently there were undeclared trials and competitions too... Then the principal vocalist or instrumentalist was not a mere *primus inter pares*. A few were autocrats and tyrants confident of, secure in and never reluctant to lay hands on their rich armoury in *manodharma*. The times gave scope for it and they had the self-confidence and challenging spirit, inputs and the guts to indulge in it! It is all to the weighted 'credit' side of *manodharma* that equipped them so!

★ ★ ★

Manodharma ensures variety, ever fresh presentation and freedom from the shackles of notation and pre-digested *alaapana*, *swaras* and *tana*. It would be well nigh impossible for a classical artiste to give a rubber-stamp encore of any presentation as in other systems. Further the artiste is faced with a continuous interplay of the conscious and the sub-conscious minds vying with each other trying to present yet another new, fresh and ostensibly a better one! And *manodharma* is given full play or a restricted role depending on the occasion, the nature of audience, the time of presentation and the time allotted. *Manodharmic sancharas*, *sanngatis*, manipulative *swara* delineation, etc., leave a lasting and lingering impact on the *rasika*, who stands enslaved by their excellence and seeks to recapture and relive the experience any time after it! He is pleasantly haunted by conjuring visions of the alluring rendition once heard [and stored up in memory] even as a fond lover regales himself with the delectable joys shared with his/her lover as is most nonchalantly brought out by the saintly recluse, the Uthukadu bard, in song *Alai Paayudee* [*Kaanada*]:

'Oru tanitta vanattil anaittu unarcei koduttu magiltava'

[How in that isolated jungle, you fondly embraced me and injected ravishing joy!]

And national poet Subramania Bharati too

endows a lady with many a happy recollection of baby Krishna such as planting a kiss so like her husband! Superlative *manodharmic* presentation lasts, lingers indelibly, ready to be recalled.

★ ★ ★

'A thousand thoughts lie within a man that he does not know till he takes on his pen to write', said William Makepeace Thackeray. Why to pen only? Veteran connoisseurs, critics and *rasikas* could recall phases of thrilling, soulstirring rendition of Maharajapuram, Ariyakudi, Musiri, T.N. Rajarathinam, Mali and other veterans in scores and smile at vacance like a philosopher, scientist or a lawyer at the flash of a productive, conjuring thought or solution. In spite of failure at successive concerts of Maharajapuram Viswanatha Ayyar, I have seen connoisseurs flocking for one—yes, just one flash—of his once gallant lilting *manodharmic* phrase, some sudden cloud-bursts of pageantry, unbridled fireworks, cascades of intrusions into the deepest recesses of the grandeur of the musical jungle with its crowded tropical embellishments and incursions into the vast imagery and vistas of musical outer space which indeed has no limit.

'Experience is not what happens to you; but what you make of what happens to you', said Aldous Huxley. In 1940, Sangita Kalanidhi T.V. Subba Rao declared:

'The number of musicians practising music is now a legion. But few of them could equal them in depth, power or imagination of the giants of old.'

This is partly attributable to causes like urbanisation, appearance of notation system, proliferation of cassettes, the total disappearance of *gurukula* system, the short duration of collegiate and institutional courses in music which go to the conferment of qualifications in a quicker period of time and the practice of apprentices choosing preceptors according to their convenience, availability and adjustability. For short, *ad hoc* durations and the commercial relationship between the two. The practice of listening, assimilation and intensive exercise or rehearsal has taken a back seat as could be seen from the sparse presence of musicians at concerts of other artistes. Books, notation, cassettes, radio or television have taken over instead.

(To be concluded)

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Impressive dance debut in Geneva

—Chitra Subramanian



Debutante Anusha with Guru : Sujatha Venkatesh

Art lovers of Geneva were treated to two hours of inspiring Bharatanatyam Arangetram of Anusha Sundaram, daughter of Raji and Ambi Sundaram.

Anusha is a student of Sujatha Venkatesh, herself a Bharatanatyam dancer from Bangalore. The young artiste presented a complete and traditional repertoire beginning with a Pushpanjali in Arabi, weaving the performance through a Varnam in Shanmugapriya and ending with a Tillana (Maand).

Insightful commentary kept the audience rapt in attention as the dancer went from the simple Alarippu to the

complicated Varnam and a delightful Kuravanji.

Vocal support, was provided by Vasudha, also from Bangalore. Bhavani Shankar was on the Mridangam and Janaki Raghunath accompanied on the violin. Mahesh accompanied the performance on the flute.

Fifteen year-old Anusha is a student of tenth standard at the International School in Geneva. The guru, Ms. Venkatesh, had her initial training under Chandrabhaga Devi and U.S. Krishna Rao. She moved to Geneva in 1984 and has since devoted her time to propagating this Indian art form in Europe through workshops and performances. □

Mixed Fare in ANKURA Festival

—Athreya

One of the major, very useful annual activities of the Karnataka Nrityakala Parishath (representing dancers of all descriptions in the State) is ANKURA a festival of budding aspirants. The fourth such festival this year featured 21 young dancers, including Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi and Kathak. Bharathanatyam was in a majority.

In retrospect one found that ideal pieces like Padam and Javali are thrust to the background, in preference to the descriptive Devaranama. Thus it was no easy task to assess the youngsters' achievement in the aspect of abhinaya.

Under the circumstances the only means of judging their dancerly potential was left to Nritha. Even in Varnams the tendency seemingly is to go for numbers that don't easily lend themselves to interpreting the 'Nayika Bhava's and the corresponding 'sancharis'.

Rashmi Srinivas (Guru : Nandini Eashwar) was a case in point. The popular composition Veeri-Boni (Bhairavi) is a favourite of all musicians. But the Thana Varnam falls short lyrically. Hence the piece had to sustain only on Nritha. Rashmi, no doubt, was adequate in laya-based forays. But could not carry conviction, the sancharis remaining elusive.

The case of K.S. Poornima (Guru : Radha Sridhar) was no better. Instead of a tested padavarna worthy of a senior like her, she delineated a popular kriti Brochevarevaru (Khamas), investing it with Sholkattus. It was odd to say the least. More questionable is the move to introduce Jatis to a well-known keerthana Srimahaganapathi (Sowrashtra). In either case, abhinaya was at a discount.



K.S. Poornima

Nor did Janani Murali (Guru : Padma Murali) reveal a better sense of aesthetics, Nritha turning out to be a mainstay. Sumathi Inamdar (Guru : Geetha Datar) revealed a good grounding in the idiom, forcefully projected in the



Janani Murali

varna Moha Maya (Karaharapriya). There were flowing grace in her Angikas, but her abhinaya was below par, the facials failing to register any expression.

Sangeeta Puneekar, Shilpa Puneekar (Guru : The Kirans) also evoked a sense of empathy. How can a kriti like Senapathe (Pantuvarali) inspire a meaningful exposition! It is for this reason that Urmila Doreswamy and Madhumathi Rao (Guru : Padmini Rao) scored. Swamiya Karedu (Keeravani), though lyrically commonplace, sparkled in well-knit. Adavus and sleek expressiveness. There was poise in their stance. Urmila's interpretation for Advam Shullvay and Madhu's for Chelinenetlu (Javali) substant-



Vidya Shimpladka

ially brought out the nayika element.

Vidya Shimpladka (Guru : Padmini Ramachandran) and Ajay V. (Guru : Lalitha Srinivasan) also revealed an attractive persona in Nritha, but the facials are no match to

the former's elegance. Sowmya Attreya also falls in a similar perspective.



Sowmya Athreya

Even for Kuchipudi V. Karpagam (Guru : Lakshmi Rajamani) appeared rather theatrical. Her Nritha also



Karpagam V.

could do with some restraint in the flashy flexions.

V. Bharathi, M. Pavitra and Sanka Puranik (Guru : Maya Rao) in their Kathak showed promise, their Angikas, Charis in the thumri showing an instant lyrical appeal. But their facials have yet to gain depth.

Not Misplaced

In presenting young talent the suffix 'Prodigy' is liberally used. The chances of exaggeration are greater in the case of Bharathanatyam. For dance is essentially abhinaya-oriented, though the laya aspect cannot be under-mined. In the case of Neelima (Guru Avasarala Rukmaji of Vijayawada) the term was not fully misplaced. While the 12-year old's talent is verily precocious as evidenced in her lively stance, dignified bearing and sharp Thattu-Mettu, it was more pronounced in the Shabdham 'Sarasijakshula.

The day's varnam was Rupamu Joochi (Thodi). The initial Nritha torays at once



Nilima

spoke for her firm grounding in laya, a study rehearsals seen in every movement. But her

abhinaya seemingly drew more on over pleasantaries, than any purposeful expression. Overall, it was an impressive recital for the Kirans.

The same Varnam Rupamu Joochi later in the Vidya Bhavan was seen in a different perspective in the interpretation of Gowri Kikkeri (Guru : Padmini Rao). Even in the invocatory stage a pleasant shift in Gowri's gait was evident. Particularly reassuring to see that she had eschewed the nagging hesitancy. The resultant Nritha and Nrithya showed a more convincing application. Though lacking in flexion and rechikas her Adavus and



Gowri Kikkeri

Angikas were in place, vouching for substantial home work. ■

Earlier, Vijaya Marthanda's Laya-Lasya, School of Bharatha- natya and Kathak, presented a composite programme of dance at Kuvempu Kalakshe- tra.

Though 10-year old, the students of the school appeared not fully mature. Their Nritha had little of Kathak in it. But the Angikas were not short in linear grace. It is their expression which let them down.

Of the two main choreographed pieces in the agenda Krishna Leela made an impact more due to its dancerly formatious than an expressive intent. Otherwise it could not take one beyond a classroom exercise. However, the same over-emphasis on Nritha gave a better imagery for Vasanthotsava. A flurry of flowing movements and graceful Sthanakas lent a touch of gaiety to the 100-minute programme.

Like Laya-Lasya, Kowshika Nritya Vahini also has to make the meat with inexperienced dancers, the only exception being Mala Shashikanth, its Director.

Mala it was who brought credibility to the entire programme. The central piece titled Nupura-Ganga was based on a legend on Kaveri. Hence the confusion in the world "Ganga".

The redeeming feature is the familiar story of Lopamudra had a crisp movement. The Nritha was easy in its movement, thus accounting for some lively visuals. But Abhinaya right through remained as elusive as ever. □

Cine Star Shines in Bharathanatya



Bhavana

Bhavana is a cine star of repute. Like others in the tinsel world she has been attracted by Bharathanatyam.

Student of the Kiran's, her

performance a while ago spoke for her earnest approach to the art. Her laya was in place and Angikas as in Ganesha Vandana testified to a keen

understanding of the basic elements. But the following pieces in Jayanthasri fell short in meeting the dancerly purport. The Verna Swamiye Vara (Poorvikalyani) revelled with some glowing theermamams. But even in the first avartha, when the natuvanga was thumping in the third kala, Bhavana was blissfully content on the first. kala. It caused utter confusion in the korvais.

What lent substance to Bhavana's recital was her trite Abhinaya. Whether it was the Virahothkantitha in the varna or the Kanditha in Aduvam Sholluval, she used her facials with conviction. If she pays greater attention to the Drishti Bhedha she is sure to go places. □

Samata's sharad - Vilasa Impresses

—K. Raghavendra Rao

Samata Adhyayana Kendra of Mysore has been doing significant work in the field of upliftment of women under the Presidentship of Dr. Vijaya Dabbe, the well-known protagonist of women's rights. It has been holding counselling sessions, talks, seminars and has brought out several publications in Kannada on related subjects. It has secured a site in one of the Extensions and is moving towards the construction of its Centre with the co-operation of several organisations of the city.

In this laudable objective, the Kendra had organised a Dance - Drama at Jaganmohan Palace Auditorium on July 10.

The feature styled "Sharad-Vilasa" was presented by "Nrityalaya" run by Dr. Tulasi Ramachandra. Dr. Tulasi, a

post-graduate in Kannada learnt Bharata Natya from Lalitha Dorai of Bangalore and from her well known sister Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal.

Dr. Tulasi has done considerable research in this field under the guidance of the renowned Kannada scholar Dr. T.V. Venkatachala Shastry for her thesis "Kannada Sahityadalli Nritya Kaleya Ugama Mattu Vikasagalu". Apart from the main subject matter, the very bibliography and glossary of terms she has collected make this an important reference volume.

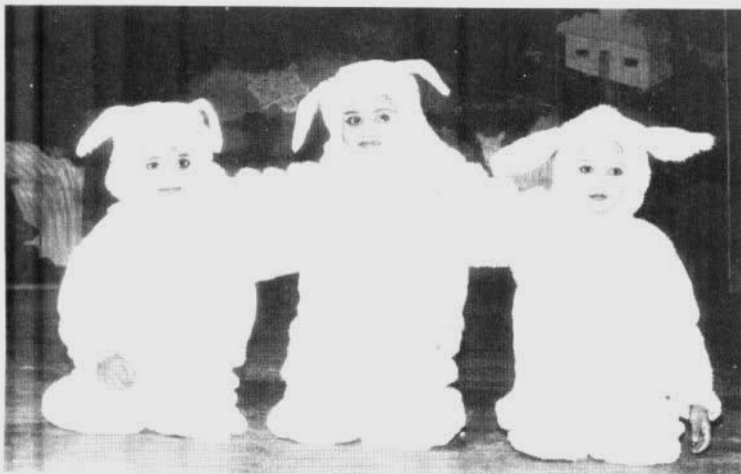
Concurrent to her research work, she has been striving for reconstruction of dances as depicted in Kannada literature over centuries. She has choreographed and presented many dances and dance - drama's based on poems and



Dr. Tulasi Ramachandra

episodes from Kannada works, both ancient and modern. The latest production was "Sharad vilasa", based on the "Subhadra Parinaya episode" from Kumara Vyasa's immortal work. "Karnata Bharatha Kathamanjari". The story is too well-known, what needs mention is the manner in which a group of her disciples depicted the seasons, she herself taking on the role of sutradhari, serving as bridges between various sequences of the drama.

Pushpanjali, a Mallari piece offered by Dr. Tulasi clad in her white silk dress ensemble drew attention, with the silhouette effects brought on by some intelligent lighting by Ravish. Kshama Lakshman as Arjuna, Soumya as Krishna, Punitha as Balarama, Deepti Mukunda as Sathyabhama and Chandana as Subhadra were effective. Special mention must be made of the graceful lasya exhibited by Chandana who portrayed Subhadra while



The Three Rabbits

reciprocating the love of Arjuna, to the strains of what is probably the most romantic of Indian ragas —Behag. The way she pointed out a group of peacocks to Arjuna, while imitating their movements, remains indelibly etched in the memory.

The music composed by Ganakalashree Sukanya Prabhakar was rendered by an ensemble comprising Madikeri Nagendra on vocal, N.N. Ganeshkumar on violin and H.L. Shivashankar Swami on mridanga, tabla and khol. Aparna was on Natuvanga Dwarakantha's simple but effective stage setting and Rajeshwari Vastralaya's costumes contributed to the overall effect of the one hour long dance - drama.

Absorbing Dance

Bharatanjali School of Dance, Sheela Sridhar, Samskrutha-Samskruthi Varshacharana Samithi and Pratibha Samsat came together to hold a three-day festival of Bharathanatya, here in July last. A folk-dance recital and an Ashtavadhana by R.Krishna the well-known Industrialist-Philanthropist of Mysore, inaugurated it.

Sheela Sridhar, student of M. Vishnudas, K. Venkatalakshamma and later Kalakshetra, Chennai, has given a number of performances here and also in major cities of Europe. She established the Bharatanjali School in 1985 and has trained a number of aspirants.

The first day's Bharathanatya recital was by Hema Ramesh, Varalaxmi Ramani and Usha Shanmuganathan, all from Chennai and ex-alumni of Kalakshetra. The fare comprised Deepanjali (Nata), Vande Mataram (Desh), Natyanjali (Ragamalika), a Varna in Nataranj and a Thillana.

Sheela herself presented the delectable "Shringa-pura adheeswari Sharade" (Kalyani) and Sripadaraja Swami's "Saddu maadali bedavo" (Salagabhairavi). It was an



The Sutradhari

engaging, fare Guruprasad on vocal, H.S. Tandava Murthy on violin, A.P. Krishna Prasad on flute and B. Ravishankar on Mridanga, provided the musical support.

The second evening's programme was styled as "Swara-Laya". Appropriately, it started with intonations in Revathi and Bauli, paying obeisance to Lord Shiva through the well known



Sheela Sridhar

couplet "Angikam bhuvanam yasya" and moved on to the ancient raga Mayamalavagaula. The students of Bharatanjali in the age range of six to, 12 presented a forty-minute absorbing recital in a logical sequence right from Sarale Varase to run through the different "angas" of dance. It was a revelation that Kaleidoscopic groupings with perfect co-ordination could be this beautiful.

The latter half comprised a variety of folk dances. What with colourful costumes, steps, groupings, high-pitched singing and sheer ebullience it had its due impact.

The last evening's programme was in the Bharathanatya marga by senior disciples of the school; Amrutha, Samanvitha, Saritha, Nivedita, Vidya Venkataramu and Preeti Venkataramu. This writer has witnessed Samanvitha's Rangapravesha three years ago and feels happy that she

has improved a lot. While all of them did well, Vidya Venkataramu, drew attention with her nritya—light on her feet and with her anga—shuddhi, she reminds one of bronze icons.

This writer feels constrained that while Guruprasad is a good vocalist, his intonation of the fifteenth mantra of Ishopanishad gave exactly the opposite meaning due to wrong break-up of words. Obviously, he has not understood the import of what he was singing. Such liberties should not be taken with Vedas and Upanishads or for that matter, with any krithi.

The audience turn-out was good on all days. The proceedings were conducted mostly in Sanskrit by Dr. M.A. Jayashri.

Mrigasandesha

Mrigasandesha conveys a message from the animal kingdom to the human race for peaceful and harmonious co-existence, a message of animal wisdom in survival and symbiosis. At no other time in his history did man need this message so directly and so urgently than now.

Brahmvidya, a cultural organisation of Mysore, celebrated the National Sanskrit year by presenting two dance-dramas based on tales from two classics Panchatantra and Hitopadesha to convey this message. The fare enacted by children in the age group of five and 12 was

put on boards at the Jaganmohan Palace in May last.

Panchatantra and Hitopadesha are the quintessence of human wisdom of India, consisting of animal tales in five books, imparted to a young wayward prince by Vishnusharman, as lessons in the art of survival. The tales relate to all sorts of animals—the mighty but, foolish the, tiny but cunning, the meek but helpful, the weak but wise and so on, in parables from the animal jungle with telling parallels to the human jungle.

In “Bhasurakha Simha Katha”, lion king Bhasurakha is a very destructive force in the jungle. He kills other animals for mere fun. In order to put an end to this, the animals congregate and go to the lion king and talk to him into an agreement. Accordingly, the animals take turns to offer themselves as food to the mighty Bhasurakha.

When it is finally the turn of the clever rabbit it tricks the lion to kill himself. This interesting story is the “Mitrabedha” portion of Panchatantra.

Durjansneha the other story is of two friends—a deer and a crow—and an evil stranger, a fox. The deer gets enamoured by the machinations of the fox (against the good advice of the crow) and gets herself trapped. But, the good crow comes to the aid of the deer and releases it from her deadly predicament. This is an adaptation from the



Senior Disciples of Bharathanjali School

“Hitopadesha”.

Both the stories with dialogues in Sanskrit, were set to Bharathanatyam by Radhika Nandakumar Founder-Director of Brahma Vidya. Music was composed by R.S. Nandakumar employing appropriate Raagas. The music ensemble comprised R.S. Nandakumar as lead singer along with Bindu, Rajani Subramanya and Suresh for both solo and chorus parts. Radhika conducted the dance. H.S. Tandava Murthy, A.P. Krishna Prasad and Jaichandra Rao were on violin, flute and Mrudanga respectively. Gangadhra Swami's decor was appropriate.

The Children in appealing costumes acquitted themselves very well. The audience applauded the sincere application of the youngsters. Annapoorna and Bhoomika, who as sutradharins stole the show with their absolute involvement, deserve special mention.

Veena Wizardry

—S.N. Sivaswamy

When I was a gangling teenager, I first heard R.S. Keshavamurthy, one of the renowned veena players of this century, a disciple of none other than the great Veena Subbanna of Mysore. That was in the thirties, and the venue was Shankarayya Hall, the premises of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja.

Great veena players in those days came from Mysore, known as the haven of Vainikas. Later, much later, I was able to hear recitals by Keshavamurthy's illustrious sons, R.K. Srinivasa Murthy, R.K. Suryanarayana and R.K. Prakash, all chips off the old block, but as dissimilar in musical style and personality from one another as from their parent-mentor, who himself was an individualist when it came to exploring the depths and nuances of the delicate instrument.

As a young lad I also had the opportunity of attending Keshavamurthy's concerts at Mysore, where he was affectionately called Keshavayya. In one such memorable concert, I remember he played Kambhoji which he treated most expansively as though the raga was meant to demonstrate his inexhaustible talent. He did not seem to have any time for other ragas that day. An elaborate ragalapana, followed by a masterly tana, and a ragamalika pallavi enthralled the spell bound audience.

During the ragamalika I

could feel that Keshavamurthy was rather partial to ragas with shades of Hindustani music like Behag, Jenjhuti and Hindolam. There was no loud speaker system in those days, but Keshavayya's nimble fingers made his Veena vibrate to its full potential and even those like me squatting at the back of the hall could hear every stroke, every gamaka clearly enough.

The concert at Shankarayya hall was the occasion I cherish, especially Keshavamurthy's rendering of the Bhairavi Varnam, Viriboni. I must have heard Viriboni hundreds of times, but Keshavayya's rendering left a lasting impression on my mind. An elderly connoisseur sitting next whispered to me that Keshavamurthy had achieved this perfection as he practised this varnam for hours everyday all his life. He added reverentially that the Veena I was hearing was gifted by Subbanna to his beloved disciple.

Decades later, I learnt from R.K. Suryanarayana, Keshavamurthy's son, that the treasured Veena was safe in the custody of R.K. Padmanabha, his youngest brother. They were eleven brothers, a veritable cricket team.

Suryanarayana, like all his brothers learnt music from Keshavamurthy. All eleven were trained veena players, though a couple of them became vocalists and one of them, a mridangam player. Suryanarayana, however



R.K. Suryanarayana

specialised in the art of Veena. To listen to his Veena concert is always a refreshing experience. While Keshavamurthy concentrated on developing the Tana, Suryanarayana turned his attention to Kalpana Swara. As a matter of fact, Kalpana or improvisation is his strong point whether in essaying a raga alapana, or tanam or kriti. There is improvisation even in his playing technique, as he uses all his ten fingers to produce a colourful effect in sound production.

I have heard Suryanarayana many times, and on each occasion I have wondered at his dexterity and control over the Veena which enable him to play at enormous speeds. His dazzling style, vivacity and enthusiastic experimentation are qualities I admire in him. With the rich reverberation emanating from the main strings, abetted by the sympathetic strings, he weaves on the Veena such an atmosphere of magic and melody that leaves you wondering whether you are hearing a single instrument or a string ensemble.

□

Hidden Talent Galore in SSS Annual

Swar Sadhna Samiti, organised the four-day 34th annual Sangeet Sammelan—(Swarsadhnotsava'99) April last in Mumbai. The festival enthralled the audiences with an array of vocal, instrumental and dance programmes rendered by artistes from all over India.

Opening with the traditional Saraswati Vandana composed by the Samiti's co-founders, Dr. Aban E. Mistry and her Guruji Pt. Keki S. Jijina, the sammelan introduced a host of hidden talent from all over India. It was a refreshing change listening to pristine Indian classical music, free from the gimmickery of modern commercialisation. Music flowed from the artistes' heart and struck the chords of its audiences, charging the ambience with a spiritual aura.

Leading vocalists Dr.



"Pakhawaj & Tabala" book by Dr. Aban Mistry being released

Prabha Atre, Dr. Sushila Rani Patel, Pt. Dinkar Kaikini, Pt. Mahadeo Mishra, all from Mumbai along with Dr. Ram Borgaonkar (Latur) rendered exquisite raagas. Sunanda Nair and her disciples presented a well-choreographed Mohini Attam Dance recital.

A Pakhawaj Kacheri by Pt. Vijay and Ajay Ram Das (Ayodhya), Pt. Udhav Appegaonkar (Ambejogai), along with

Dnyaneshwar Sawant (Mumbai), provided an unusual item. V. Balsara's (Calcutta) piano recital demonstrated his mastery over the key board by bringing Indian ragas in a western instrument.

Tabla maestro, Dr. Aban E. Mistry with her creative genius held the audiences spell-bound during her Solo recital. She performed the rare feat of presenting four Taals at the same time by using both her hands, a foot and reciting orally, synchronising them to start and end on the same beat!

Eminent personalities were felicitated with Swar Sadhna Ratna award for their contribution to Indian Classical Music. Another highlight of the Sammelan was the release of 'Pakhawaj & Tabala—History, Schools & Traditions', a book in English authored by Dr. Aban E. Mistry.



Tabala Solo by Dr. Aban E. Mistry

Senior critic feted



Sri B.V.K. Shastri

The highlight in the cultural arena of the City in the preceding month was an impressive function to felicitate senior art critic B.V.K. Shastri.

The function at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja was

organised by a committee of hosts, including such eminent persons like Dr. A.H. Rama Rao, H. Kamalanath, Dr. Raja Ramanna, *et al.*

Led by Dr. H. Narasimhaiah, deservedly glowing tributes were showered on the veteran critic, besides presenting him a Re. one-lakh purse.

The occasion added significance as "Murali Vani", a collection of all Mr. Shastri's writings was released. The book is voluminous, carrying rare pieces of archival importance. Verily a useful



reference book that should adorn the shelves of every discerning literacy.

—FAC

Another music sabha for Udupi

Keeping in view the following objects of promoting Karnataka and Hindustani systems of Music, and talented musicians of the area, a new institution was inaugurated in Udupi with the name "Sa Ri Pa Da Ni Ga Ma", in May last.

Presided over by the



Another Music Sabha for Udupi

eminent musician and founder of "Nada Vybhavam" Udupi, Vasudeva Bhat, Vidwan Madhoor P. Balasubramanyam inaugurated the forum and unveiled the portrait of Attavara Janardan, a Harmonium Maestro of Mangalore.

Vidwan K. Purushotham Tantry, chief guest, recalled the efforts of Attavar Gokuldas, the founder of "Sa Ri Pa Da Ni Ga Ma". A.P. Kodaneha, in his felicitations said that he was happy that his native village had such an institution and promised whole-hearted co-operation. V. Arvinda Hebbar, Secretary, Raaga Dhana, said

that such institutions were a necessity in this temple town.

Sri Vishwa Prasanna Theertha, Swamiji of Pejavar Mutt, while blessing the institution, praised the efforts of Gokuldas Attavar. Vasudeva Bhat recalled the valuable services rendered by eminent musicians of yaster-years and called upon the younger generation to faster and nurture music which is the core of Indian culture.

Earlier, Kumar Karthik sang the invocation and U.R. Madhyastha welcomed the gathering. Founder Attavar Gokuldas proposed a vote of thanks.

The programme was directed by veteran vocalist H. Chandrashekar Kedlilaya.

—FAC

Nyasa Dance Competition

A dance competition marked the 85th Birthday of the late T.V. Gopinath Das, the founder of Prabhat Kalavidaru. The two-day fare featured more than 100 aspirants in the Sub-Junior, Junior, Senior sections.

The styles that vied for honours were Bharathanatyam and Kathak, a rolling shield being a bonus in either case.

PRIZE WINNERS BHARATHANATYAM:

Sub-Junior—I prize—Neelima (Vishakapatnam); II Prize—Mrudula Venugopal (Bangalore).



T.V. Gopinathdas

Junior—I Prize—Padmini Upadya; II—Prize—Shilpa Utappa.

Senior—I Prize—Indhu M. II—Prize—Josphine Savitha.

The Rolling Shield went to Indhu M. Student of Nirupama Rajendra.

KATHAK:

Sub-Junior I Prize—Suniana Chaudary.

Junior I Prize—Mridula Rao.

Senior—I Prize—Sankya Puranik.

The Rolling Shield went to Sankya Puranik, Student of Maya Rao and Chitra Venugopal.

Pre-trinity composers' Day

—G.V.

The Samskrita Sangha of Indian Institute of Science has been celebrating 'Purandaradasa Day and Tyagaraja Aradhana' for the last nine years. As a new venture, on August 14, the Sangha got up, a unique program persenting songs of more than 25 pre-Trinity composers, with an aim to promote awareness about composers who lived before the era of the Trinity. The main participants were the Institute students, some senior atristes of the Institute campus also taking part in the event.

The program started with the majestic Bhairavi Varnam Viriboni of Pachimi-

riyam Adiyappa. A few compositions of the Sangitha Pitamaha followed. Compositions of saints of the various Bhakti movements like the Haridasas, Nayanmars and Alwars, were covered. Songs from the musical operas GITA GOVINDA and KRISHNA LILA TARANGINI, the compositions of Oothukkadu Venkatasubbaier, select compositions of Sadasiva Brahmendra represented a plethora of Krishna Bhakti presentation. Padams of Kshetrajna, Annamayya and kirtanas of Bhadrachala Ramadas presented a overview of Telugu Bhakti literature.

A few compositions of the

Tamil Trinity, Muthuthandavar, Marimutha Pillai and Arunchalakavi Rayar were also presented. The program concluded with a Mangalam of Bhadrachala Ramadasa. Although the pre-Trinity music literature is exhaustive, only a kaleidoscopic view could be presented due to the limited time.

Slides containing a brief write-up about each composer and compositions were displayed during the program. The August 1999 issue of PHOENIX has throuwn a lot of light on the pre-Trinity compo- sers and provided a major source for the preparation of the write-up. Following the success of this program, the Sangha is contemplating on celebrating 19th century compsoers' day.

PAC comes out with 2 more useful books

Unlike most music festivals, spread over almost through the year and sponsored by Sabhas of varied descriptions, the Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore, adds a third dimension to its programmes. Besides the usual concerts and academic discussions, this exclusive organisation dedicated to the promotion of laya-based musical instruments, invariably releases one or more publications on the relative topics to add significance to such festivals.

This year's annual of the Centre in April-May last was no exception. The two books published during the five-day event were: 1. *Achievements in the field of percussive arts over 50 years (1947-97)*. It is a useful compilation of papers presented on the subject



H. Puttachar Memorial Award was presented to V. Praveen

during the annual of 1998. The writers are all scholars in their own chosen field, and their observations, are worth giving more than cursory reading.

The second book is a compilation of musical

compositions of the late H. Narasinga Rao, a flutist of repute. The tract which carries a brief life sketch of the versatile artiste presents 15 compositions including Swara Jatis, Krits and devotionals. They are in a wide variety of ragas and carefully notated. It is a painstaking effort of Vidushi Padma Gurudutt, courtesy the maestro's daughter Indumati.

The annual festival commemorating the memory of the Mridangam wizard Palghat Mani Iyer, was inaugurated by the Pontiff of the Suttur Math. This was followed by the presentation of the Palani Subramanya Pillai award (donated by Sudha and Dr. A.H. Rama Rao of Ramasudha Charitable Trust). The award was conferred on



K. Putturao Memorial Award presented to Vidwan A. Kannan



Palani Subramanya Pillai Award conferred to Vidwan V.V. Ranganathan

Vidwan V.V. Ranganathan, a leading mridangam artiste of yesteryears.

A laya vinyasa in 'Chandana tala' by T.A.S. Mani and a Jalatarang recital by B.D. Venugopal formed part of the proceedings of the day.

The H. Puttachar Memorial Award (donated by H.P. Ramachar) was presented to V. Praveen, a prominent Mridangam artiste on the second day. A Harikatha by Belur Vasanthalakshmi and a vocal recital by Dr. B.S. Vijayaraghavan were the other attraction of the evening.

The third day was marked by a vocal recital by Suguna Purushotham and Suguna Varadachari. This was preceded by a Harikatha by B. Bharathi of Sarvaraya Harikatha Patashala of East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh.

An expert committee considered the R & D activities to

the leathers and woods required in the manufacture of percussive instruments. A study circle on the maintenance of mridangam by P.V. Parameshwaran was as interesting. The concert for the day was by veteran R.K. Srikantan, an endowment created by him for a symposium on the Birth Centenaries of Masters of Music preceded the concert.

The validictory at the Chowdaiah Memorial Hall was as usual a gala fare when the prestigious K. Putturao Memorial Award (in memory of Palghat Mani Iyer) was given away to Vidwan Madras A. Kannan of Chennai. The Award was given away by Chief Justice Y. Bhaskar Rao of the Karnataka High Court.

An impressive Carnatic vocal recital by Vidwan Ashok Ramani brought the curtains down on the colourful annual.

—FAC

Letter

Dear Editor

In the article 'Focus on Sadashiva Rao's kritis' (PHOENIX 4-1) it is said: That when Tyagaraja came to Chittoor, the birth place of Rao, in *unchavritti*, the former composed a *kriti* in *Todi* 'Sri Pavamana Kumaram' and sang it."

Sadashiva Rao, it has been widely believed, left Chittoor while yet a boy and it was a blessing in disguise. His period was 1826-1906 or 1880. Tyagaraja should have made the trip to Tirupati, Tiruvotriyur, Kanchi and Kovvur fairly long before he was too old to travel. There is perhaps no version of his visit to Chittoor or Rao receiving him there. The following is the version in the 'Garland's':

Saint Tyagaraja visited Wallajahpet and was received by Venkataramana Bhagavata. Rao was present and sang his composition, Tyagarajaswami Vedalina.

Perhaps the issue may be checked by those interested.

Chennai

Yours sincerely
Rajagopalan

Delightful Baroque Music

—(K. Raghavendra Rao)

In the Western classical music history, the period 1600—1750 AD is known as the Baroque Period", which served as a bridge between the Renaissance and the later day classical period. The Baroque music has its parallels in the German—Austrian Architecture of that age, with its elaborate, ornamental appearance and lines denoting continuity. The preceding polyphonic music gave way to the contra-puntal and new forms such as the choruses combined with arias, duets, quartets, opera, oratoria, cantata, concerto, suite, etc.

The significant change was that instruments started accompanying choruses and compositions came to be written exclusively for instruments

The basic mode of continuity was brought about by two principal lines—melody and bass, giving rise to an inbuilt harmony. The melody line was through instruments such as harpsichord, organ, recorder, etc., while the bass continuo (the continuous bass) was through instruments like cello, double bass or bass viola. The important composers of this period were Monteverdi, Correlli Scarlatti and Vivaldi from Italy, Lully and Rameau from France, J.S. Bach and Telemann from Germany and Purcell and Handel from England.

Mysore Music Association had arranged a concert of European Baroque music in the Darbar Hall of Hotel Southern Star 1st August. The group comprised Brian Brooks on Violin, Rebecca Prosser on Recorders, Timothy Merton on cello and Maggie Cole on Harpsichord. Two of the artistes were from England and the other two from U.S.A. Their passion for Baroque music brought these professional musicians cum music teachers together and this was their first tour as a group.

It was interesting to learn how they pitched upon the name "Sarasa" for their group—one of the cellist's friends is an Indian whose mother's name is "Saraswathi". On learning that this name stands for the Goddess of music, they shortened and adapted it.

The concert was a testimony to the meaning of Sarasa in Sanskrit—good aesthetics and fluency.

The instruments were themselves noteworthy. Though the violin came into use in the 16th century itself, its usage became more prominent during the Baroque period and many pieces were written for this instrument by composers like Correlli and Vivaldi especially. The violinist informed that though the violins produced in Cremona, Italy three centuries ago are

priceless preferred ones, the violin he was playing for this concert was a two-month old one manufactured by a Japanese in Canada! The Recorders are flutes which are held vertically and played, much like our pastoral folk instrument "pillangovi". The Harpsichord, a precursor of the piano is a keyboard instrument, the strings being plucked like in a Sitar or Guitar but with a mechanism which plucks when the keys are pressed. (In the piano, the strings are struck and not plucked when the keys are pressed). The artiste informed that she dared not bring her six foot long delicate harpsichord on this tour and she borrowed an electronic one from Bangalore. The baroque-cello is similar to the regular cello. But, the resting pin is not provided and the instrument is held between the thighs and played with a shorter bow. The tonal quality, however, is similar.

The Recital:

In this one and a half hour recital, the recorder and violin took the melodic line while the cello and harpsichord provided the continuous bass. Handel's (1685–1759), Sonata in C-Minor in four movements, a solo harpsichord sonata by Scarlatti (1685–1757), a Sonata in C-Minor for violin and harpsichord by J.S. Bach

(1685–1750), a Canzon, (Sonata replaced it later), the Italian Francesco Cavalli's (1602–1676) Sonata in G-Minor by Telemann (1601–1767) and a concert in D-Major by Vivaldi were the authentic Baroque fare served. Incidentally, the earliest piece was by Cavalli, who brought

into use the term “opera” in 1639. On audience demand the artists obliged with an encore, one of the very early pieces of the Baroque period by Castello (early 17th Century) when instrumental music was gaining ground and the Sonata form made its entry. In fact the title of the piece was “Prima

Sonata” the first Sonata.

Brief introductions were given for each piece which were illuminating.

Kudos to the Mysore Music Association for having arranged such a nice Baroque Music recital here. A rare but delightful event. □

INLIGHTER VEIN

Shifts in Status

—Manu Iyengar

For once, the minds of people in the film industry are ticking. People have been made to think instead of just mindless gyrations.

This temporary phase has ensured former hon'ble Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Sushma Swaraj bestowing an official “industry, status” on the film world.

Filmi log who have been fighting for this privilege for years, now have paused to find out what this actually means. Institutional finance, I suppose, as opposed to depending on shifty-eyed under world dons, sensible working hours, minimum wage, labour regulations, social security, means of legal recourse, etc. Will all this bring with it a greater degree of professionalism?

We, in the dance and music field must sit up and take notice. The government machinery has always shared a love-hate relationship with the cultural field. We cannot bear their interference, but we are unable to manage without

their aid. We complain about whom they choose to project, and crave their indulgence for a while, and if we happen to get a moment's mercy, we complain about restrictions and squirm out of the ensuing responsibilities.

Many of the institutions receiving grants from the HRD Ministry for maiden ventures/ productions, lose their credibility by misusing the funds. More taxpayers money. Therefore, the dust. The government and the cultural field, shall, at best be indifferent bed fellows.

The corporate houses beguile musicians and dancers with mega-bucks. But there is proposition that is unfaithful it's there at times and unavailable at most. Sports and popular cultural events are more worth their while, bringing national exposure and access to younger generations. So, the filtration between the arts and the corporates continue, no long-standing commitment can be achieved.

This, then, lands us squarely on the government's

doorstep. They have the money the wherewithal and the social obligation to patronize the arts. But what must we, as artistes give them back for their efforts? Do we continue to print a single invitation as proof of the usage of government grants, and fill our greedy pockets, or do we use the patronage to further the cause of the art, giving it the full reach of creativity and energy, to come up with a production which adds to our cultural heritage?

Because of a few law-breakers the credit of the artistic community is at stake. Let's try to further the cause of the field, rather than erode the pillars that are trying to strengthen its structure. Let's brave the regulations, restrictions and structures, because, without them there will be corruption and mayhem. Let's be professional in our approach, and put it an honest day's work to make us worthy of the anticipated reward. So what if Pt. Briju Maharaj has to retire from the Kathak Kendra at the age of 60 years. He is now a living legend, thanks in no small measure to the years of support secured from a government institution! □



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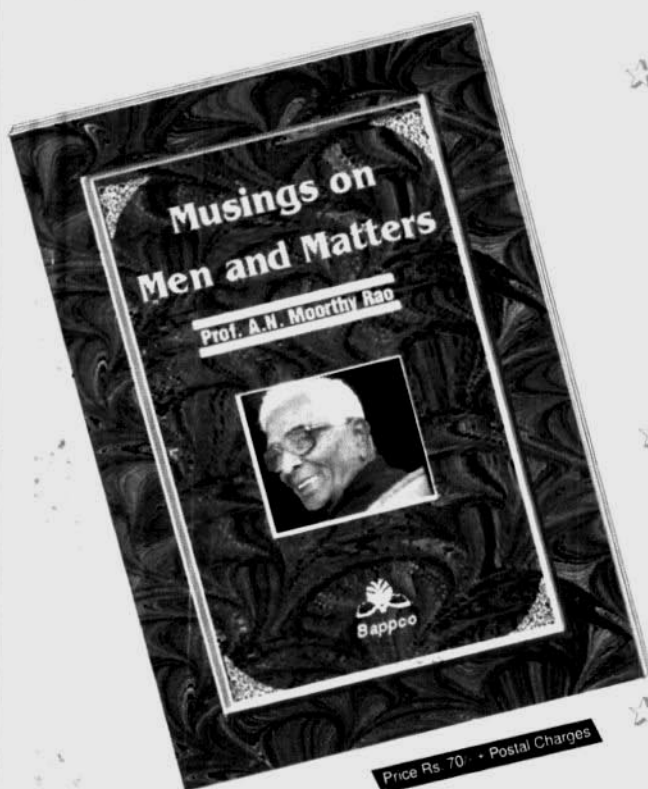
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